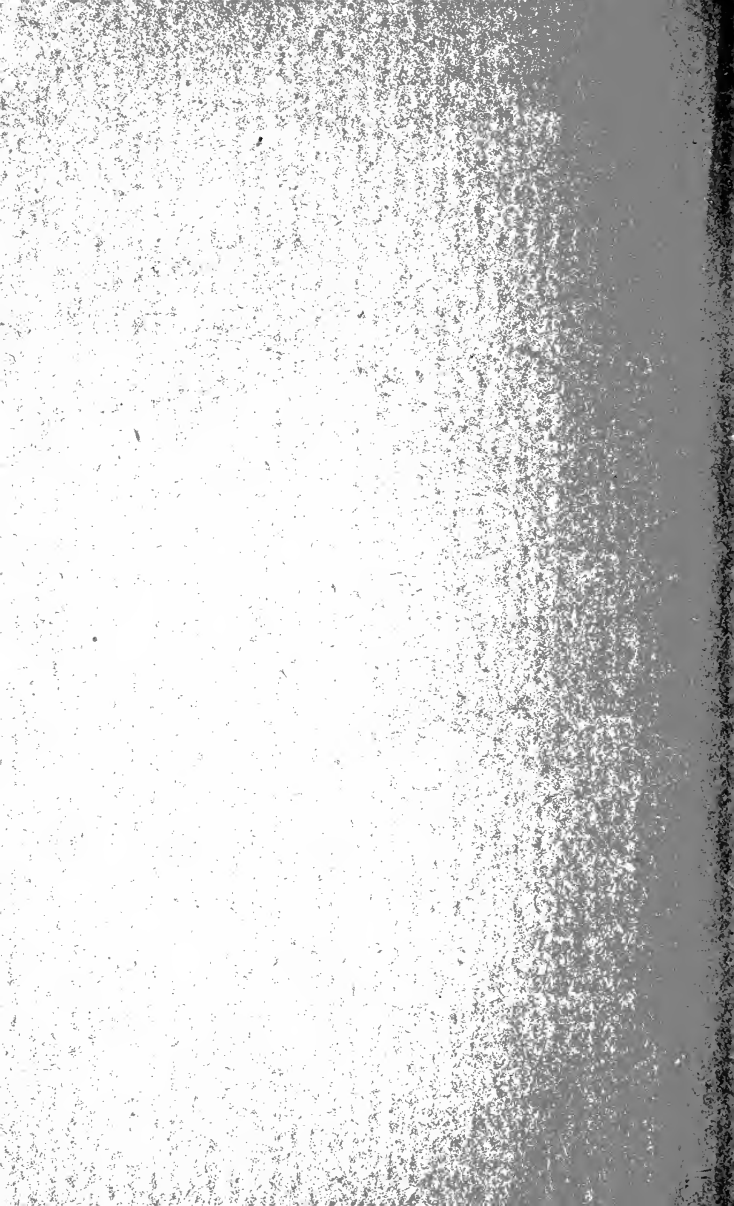




The Writings
OF
Benjamin Sulte



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B. Latta

The Writings

....OF

Benjamin Sulte



No more prolific writer lives in Canada than Mr. Benjamin Sulte, of Ottawa, historian. Unlike most writers whose pens flow easily, Mr. Sulte is conscientious, accurate and clear-cut in his writings. He is regarded as the leading author and authority on the history of Canada.

Benjamin Sulte, President of the First Section Royal Society of Canada, was born at Three Rivers, Province of Quebec, on the 17th of September, 1841. He is the only living son of Benjamin Sulte, who was owner and captain of a schooner which plied between Quebec and Halifax, and Marie Lefebvre, whose ancestor was the first French settler at Baie du Febvre (Lefebvre's Bay, Lake St. Peter), in 1683. The first Sulte (Jean) came to Canada as a soldier, in 1756, in one of the regiments under the command of Montcalm. He settled in Three Rivers.

Young Sulte left the Friars' school at the age of ten, when he could read, write and

calculate well; and by his connection with English speaking boys, he had a good knowledge of their language. At first he was a clerk in a dry goods establishment, then in a grocery store. He then became a bookkeeper with G. A. Gouin & Co., a large lumbering firm. He subsequently became purser on board one of the vessels plying between Montreal and Three Rivers; then a merchant, selling clothing in connection with the building of the Three Rivers and Arthabaska Railway; then, again, as bookkeeper at Gouin's.

Early in the 60's Mr. Sulte began to write for the newspapers, in prose and verse, and obtained considerable reputation as a virile author. In 1863 two companies of infantry were organized at Three Rivers, and M. Sulte joined one of them; and in 1865 his company (No. 1) was sent to the Niagara frontier, and he was made color-sergeant of it. On his return in July, he went to the military school, Quebec; then followed, as an editor, the autumn session of Parliament, and in February next (1866) joined his company again at the Missisquoi frontier. In July, when the men returned home, he was called to Ottawa by L. N. Duvernay, proprietor of *Le Canada*, and he became the chief editor. In those days a French paper in Ottawa was a large undertaking, because there was the whole valley of the Ottawa to attend to, while at present, Montreal, and even Quebec

furnish reading matter in abundance, and hourly, to the French population of that large region.

On the 19th of November, 1867, M. Sulte entered the service of the House of Commons, as one of its translators; and on the 19th of May, 1870, he was transferred from the House of Commons to the Department of Militia and Defense, where he is now employed.

Mr. Sulte is a man of family. On the 3rd of May, 1871, he was married in Ottawa, to Augustine, youngest daughter of Etienne Parent, Under-Secretary of State. With reference to his wife's sisters, it may be mentioned that Josephine, the eldest, married Gérin-Lajoie, one of the best French-Canadian writers; and that the second, Mathilde, married Evariste Gélinas, a brilliant journalist and a capital essayist. M. Parent was looked upon as the best newspaper editor that ever conducted a campaign in French Canada. Etienne Henri Parent, M. Sulte's brother-in-law, is the chief engineer of the St. Lawrence canals, from Lake Ontario downwards. He studied in Paris. Mr. Sulte's father was drowned Nov. 15, 1847, in the wreck of his vessel on the Gaspé coast. His mother is ninety-one, is in good health, and has no grey hairs yet.

Personally, Mr. Sulte is a charming companion. His friends laughingly declare that he is full of fire; ready to laugh, ready to

fight. He never had a headache, and he has a voice which can fill any hall. He is indeed in some demand as a lecturer; in 1878, 1886 and again in 1890, he visited the New England states and delivered lectures in the French-Canadian centers.

The first efforts of M. Sulte in the field of literature were verses published in 1859-60, under various *noms de plume*. Soon after, in 1861, he signed his own name, and at once attracted the attention of those whose taste made them attentive to the revelation of coming men. The Honorable P. J. O. Chauveau secured his productions for *Le Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, where he gave many good songs and patriotic verses. In 1864, was founded in Montreal *La Revue Canadienne*, and M. Sulte immediately became one of the most regular contributors to that publication; and he is now the only one of the old stock on the list. There he printed in 1868 his first article on the question of the destruction of our forests, a subject which at once made him known as a deep observer of the resources of Canada, and a strong prose writer. In 1870, appeared *Les Laurentiennes*, a very elegant volume, containing all the national and patriotic verses of M. Sulte. In the same year was published the first part of the "History of Three Rivers," his native city. The luxurious style of publication adopted by the author frightened the public, and the sub-

scription was meagre, but M. Sulte only answered: "Wait, and you will pay five times the same amount of money for the same work in a few years." In 1873 was distributed, in Europe, a pamphlet, entitled *La Canada en Europe*, a very sharp criticism by M. Sulte of the nonsense published in Europe about Canada. Several pamphlets appeared afterwards from his pen, such as "The History of the French-Canadians in Ottawa," and "Notes on Early Travels in the North-West Territories." In 1876, he published *Les Chants Nouveaux*, a continuation of *Les Laurentiennes*. Another fine volume was published in 1876, under the title of *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature*, the whole relating to Canada; also *Pages d'Histoire du Canada*, in one volume. *Chronique Trifluvienne* was printed in 1879, telling about the events which took place in Three Rivers between the years 1640 and 1665. This work has been highly praised. In 1881, he published a large album, of unknown plans and sketches relating to the 17th century on the St. Lawrence. The first volume of *Histoire des Canadiens-Français* was published in 1882, and the eighth and last one in the spring of 1885. It covers the whole history of Canada, but deals principally with the settlers, and very little with other matters pertaining to the history of that country. Other works of M. Sulte, such as large indexes to series of historical documents, have

been put in circulation. He is now preparing three volumes of his articles spread, since 1860, in various reviews, both in Canada, United States and France.

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